



Key Concept
Keep Your Public Information
Officers Informed

CHAPTER FOUR

Building Your Project

Now that all of the design, review, and approvals have been successfully cleared, it's time to go to construction. All projects are different, and there's no one definitive "right way" to build a project although all projects are constructed through a legally binding contract between the client and the contractor. Here are some guidelines that will help you manage your construction effort as effectively as possible.

Clarify roles and responsibilities

Who's actually the "general contractor" on the project? Make sure this is clear and that the authority to actually serve in this role has been designated to the appropriate team member. If WSDOT is serving as a consultant or contractor to the local jurisdiction on the project, it needs to be very clear what WSDOT's role is, who from WSDOT will be working on the project, the rates they will be charging, and the tasks they will perform.

- **Start with a "pre-construction" meeting to fully detail the kind of work that will take place, its sequence, and any contracting specifications.**

An early meeting of this sort gives everyone a very clear sense, up front, of what the project will entail and how it will need to be managed in order to be successful. Pre-construction means that you try to identify all of the contractor needs, tasks, and a sequence for your construction activities.

- **Use a master contract for maximum flexibility.** A "master contract" gives the local jurisdiction the flexibility it needs to use both general and sub-contractors as effectively as possible. This provides the flexibility to move funding when and where necessary to get the job done.



photo Cal Abts, Sky Shots

- ▲ *Construction of a new structure on SR 500 over Thurston Way in Vancouver, May 2002. This project had continuous involvement with adjacent businesses.*

"The key is effective communication, getting the right message to the necessary people..."

— WSDOT Construction Manual, 1-2.1C

- **Early—and constant—notification to the community is key to success during construction.** If you thought public involvement was tough during the visioning process, just wait until streets are being torn up and construction noise starts! Give early and ample warning to the community on what they can expect during construction. Update these materials frequently. Traffic management plans are also crucial at this stage.
- **Maintain teamwork.** By now you are probably working well together but pressures can mount and the team can get tense. You'll need to pay particular attention to your teamwork during the construction period.

It's essential during this time to **make sure key communication or public information staff are updated continuously**. This ensures that the city council, county commissioners, or other community officials understand what is happening with the project so they can relay information to their constituents. Often access may be blocked, closed or changed which can create frustration or even anger by local businesses. The better that local elected officials understand why the project is being built the way it is, the better they can handle citizen's reactions.

Delays can happen for a number of reasons at this point as well. Water lines can be broken, traffic channelization may not work as initially planned, weather may delay striping or markings, equipment ordered may not arrive on time, funding may not be sufficient to cover the cost of the project as originally planned, or any number of other changes could occur. It will be critical to plan for unanticipated events and keep team members and the community aware of changes. It may also create frustration with team members. **Take special care to communicate to all of the team what is occurring and seek their help resolving problems if you can.**



photo WSDOT

▲ *Construction of the Access Downtown project in Bellevue. This project is an alliance between Sound Transit, City of Bellevue, WSDOT, King County Metro, and FHWA which will provide fast and easy access—moving people in buses, carpools, and vanpools around downtown and on and off freeways more quickly.*



▲ *Good signage, such as this detour sign on Bainbridge Island, helps redirect people to local businesses.*

Need more help?

WSDOT's *Construction Manual*, publication number M 41-01, is a comprehensive document which also covers managing public expectations in sections 1-1.7, 1-2.1C, and 1-2.3. It is available on line at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/fasc/EngineeringPublications/Manuals/Construction.pdf or by contacting WSDOT's Construction office at 360.705.7822.

The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*, Part VI, 1998 edition, contains information on traffic control planning, including movement of pedestrians, transit operations, and access to property/utilities. U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA.